Discovery of a Potential Historic Buddhist site at Reddipalli Agraharam in Visakhapatnam district

By

Team of 5 History students from GITAM School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Visakhapatnam. (**M. Vaishnavi, Kanan, Dinesh, Hitesh Rawal, P. Sai Teja**) along with Freelance Archaeologist Aditya Madhav under the esteemed guidance of Historian Rani Sarma Emani. Field visit was conducted on **2nd August 2025**

Abstract:

This report documents the discovery of a potential early historic Buddhist site located towards north - west outskirts of Reddipalli Agraharam on the road to Potnuru and near Nookambika temple on the tank bund, situated within the Gosthani River basin region of Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh. The findings were made during a field visit as part of an independent research initiative aimed at identifying undocumented archaeological sites along the Gosthani River—an area that played a crucial role in trade, monastic activity, and cultural transmission during the early historic period.

Location of Site with Coordinates and the possible extent

Introduction:

Reddipalli Agraharam is a rural village located in Padmanabham Mandal, within the Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh. Geographically, it is situated approximately 2 kilometers northeast of Padmanabham town and about 14 kilometers southeast of Vizianagaram, the nearest urban center. The village lies within the Gosthani River basin, an ecologically and historically rich zone known for its fertile alluvial plains and proximity to ancient trade and cultural corridors. The elevation of Reddipalli Agraharam stands at around 38 meters above sea level, making it a low-lying but stable landscape ideal for agricultural and settlement activities since antiquity.

The village covers a total area of approximately 1301 hectares (13 square kilometers) and supports a population of 4,280 residents across 1,156 households as per the 2011 Census. It exhibits a female-majority population, with a sex ratio of 1053 females per 1000 males, which is significantly higher than the national average. The literacy rate of the village is around 51.6%, with male literacy at 57.4% and female literacy at 46%, reflecting a moderate level of educational attainment in the region. The Scheduled Caste (SC) population forms about 15.3% of the village demographic, while the Scheduled Tribe (ST) community is minimal.

Site Description

- Location: Reddipalli Agraharam village
- Geographical Setting: The site lies within the fertile plains flanking the Gosthani River. It includes a moderately elevated mound covered with vegetation, visible brick exposures, and scattered pottery fragments across the surface.
- The site might be in an area of 4 Acres
- Coordinates: (18.01467N, 83.334643E)

Artefacts Observed:

A diverse assemblage of pot sherds was collected from the mound up to 6ft from the top level which are categorized broadly into:

- **Red Ware**: Commonly used in domestic utility, including large storage jars and cooking pots.
- **Black and Black-Slipped Ware**: Thin-walled, well-fired, and likely used for fine serving ware.
- **Decorated Sherds**: Sherds with incised or grooved patterns possibly indicating ritual or formal utility.

Bricks exposures documenting:

- Large, hand-molded ancient bricks, embedded in soil and partially covered by vegetation.
- Dimensions: **31 x 27x 11 approx.** sized bricks were observed on the edge of the mound at a depth of 4.5 - 5 ft from the top layer along with potsherds.

Topography and Environmental Context:

- Mound Presence: A naturally raised landform was identified near the scattered artifacts.
- Vegetation: Largely undisturbed; vegetation density suggests limited modern interference.
- Proximity to Water: Within reach of the large and small water tank and located along the basin of Gosthani River, reinforcing the site's suitability for monastic habitation and access to trade routes.

The evidence from Reddipalli Agraharam supports the hypothesis that the Gosthani River functioned as a cultural and monastic corridor, with both major and satellite sites might have supported Buddhist life and pilgrimage activity. The material culture and structural remnants suggest that it could be a Buddhist habitation or monastic sub-center, possibly a vihara or satellite village connected to larger religious centers located nearby.

Recommendations for Further Study:

1. Detailed GPS Mapping and preparation of a GIS overlay for the site area.
2. Trial Excavations under professional supervision to confirm stratigraphy and architectural layout.
3. Comparative Ceramic Analysis with known Buddhist sites in the region.
4. Engagement with local communities to gather oral histories and prevent unauthorized digging.
5. Official Intimation to the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh, and institutions like INTACH for potential conservation.

The surface-level artefactual and architectural findings from Reddipalli Agraharam offer strong evidence of a previously undocumented Buddhist site along the historically significant Gosthani River. This discovery, if further investigated, can contribute richly to the understanding of monastic networks and regional settlement patterns in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Photographic Documentation:

- Sherd Collection Sheet
- Brick Exposure
- Site Mound & Vegetation Cover

Potsherds observed at Reddipalli Potential site

<table>
<tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr>
<tr><td>The 6 feet mound with brickbats</td><td>Extent of area covered with potsherds</td></tr>
<tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr>
<tr><td>Old Medieval temple above the mound</td><td>Present day water tank with remnants</td></tr>
<tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Observed Brick remnants and potsherds in the mound</td></tr>
</table>

Observed Brick remnants and potsherds in the mound

Broken idol inside the temple

Brick fragment from the mound

Team discussing with the land owner

Team at potential historic site

Acknowledgement:

I sincerely thank Rambabu [the land owner of the site] for being generous enough to share the historical significance of the site and the surroundings and we are also thankful to the History department faculty of GITAM University, Visakhapatnam for their guidance and providing the permission to do the field visits.